PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE
LEGACY
MARVEL
221
THE PUNISHER
ROSENBERG
VILANOVA
LOUGHRIDGE

MARVEL COMICS
PROUDLY PRESENTS:

FRANK CASTLE WAS A DECORATED MARINE, AN UPSTANDING CITIZEN, AND A FAMILY MAN. THEN HIS FAMILY WAS TAKEN FROM HIM WHEN THEY WERE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED IN A BRUTAL MOB HIT. FROM THAT DAY, HE BECAME A FORCE OF COLD, CALCULATED RETRIBUTION AND VIGILANTISM. FRANK CASTLE DIED WITH HIS FAMILY. NOW, **THERE IS ONLY...**

THE PUNISHER

FRANK CASTLE IN **PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE** *PART FOUR*

THE PUNISHER GOT HIS HANDS ON THE WAR MACHINE ARMOR AND TOOK THE FIGHT TO CHERNAYA, A ROGUE STATE IN EASTERN EUROPE OPERATING UNDER THE MILITARY REGIME OF GENERAL PETROV. PETROV TOOK POWER USING RESOURCES AND PERSONNEL FROM A FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D. OUTPOST, SET UP IN SECRET BY NICK FURY, THAT WENT SOUR AFTER THE GLOBAL SPY ORGANIZATION WENT UNDER. FURY LED FRANK TO THE ARMOR BY APPEALING TO FRANK'S DESIRE TO SAVE INNOCENTS, AS WELL AS HIS OWN DESIRE TO COVER HIS TRACKS. WAGING A ONE-MAN WAR ON PETROV'S INTERNMENT CAMPS, FRANK FREED MANY OF THE COUNTRY'S PEOPLE WHILE WIPING OUT THE SCUM RUNNING ROUGHSHOD OVER THEM. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SCUM HAS THEIR OWN SET OF ARMORED SUITS AND, OUTNUMBERING FRANK, DEALT CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE TO THE WAR MACHINE ARMOR, SINKING FRANK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA...

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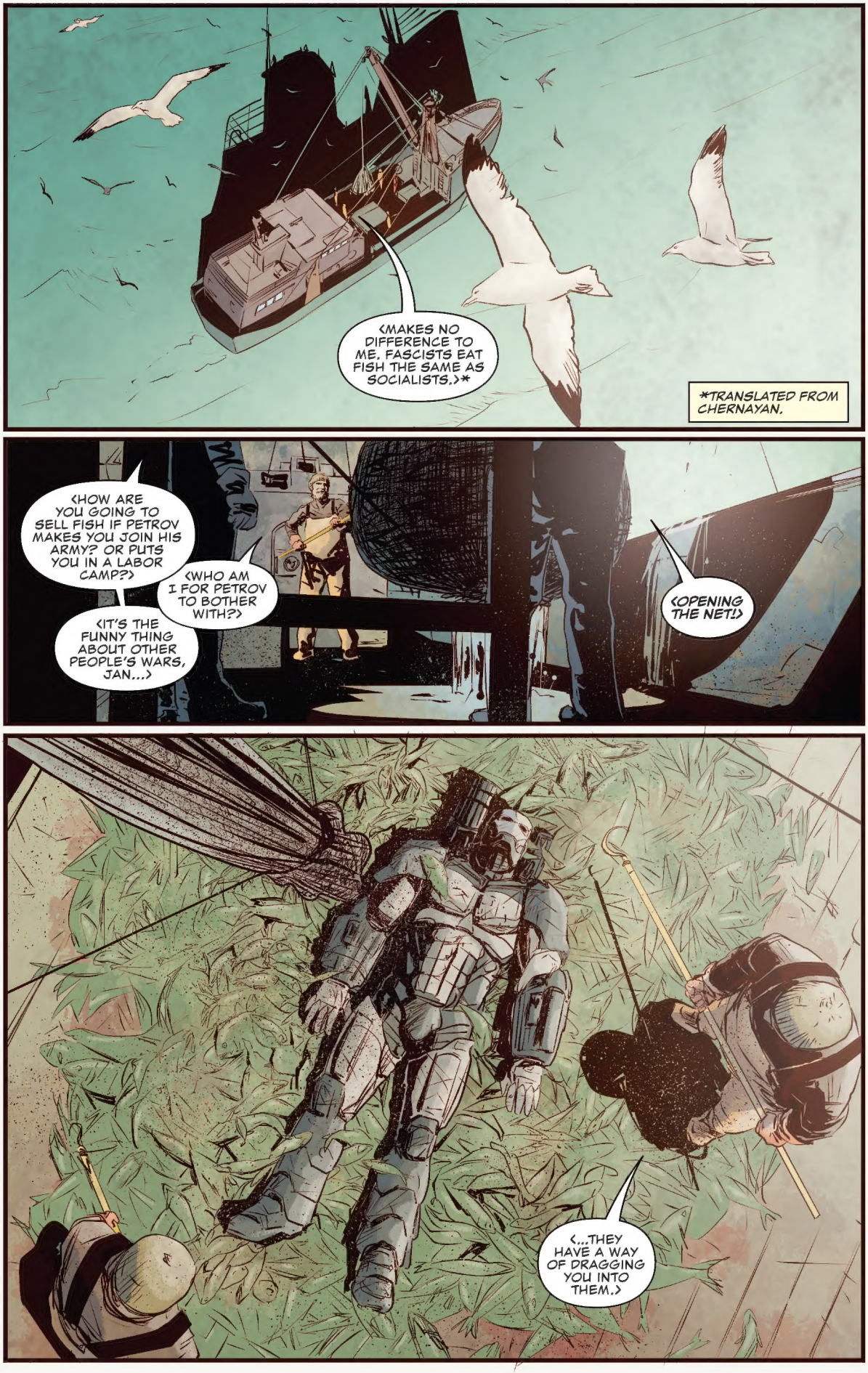
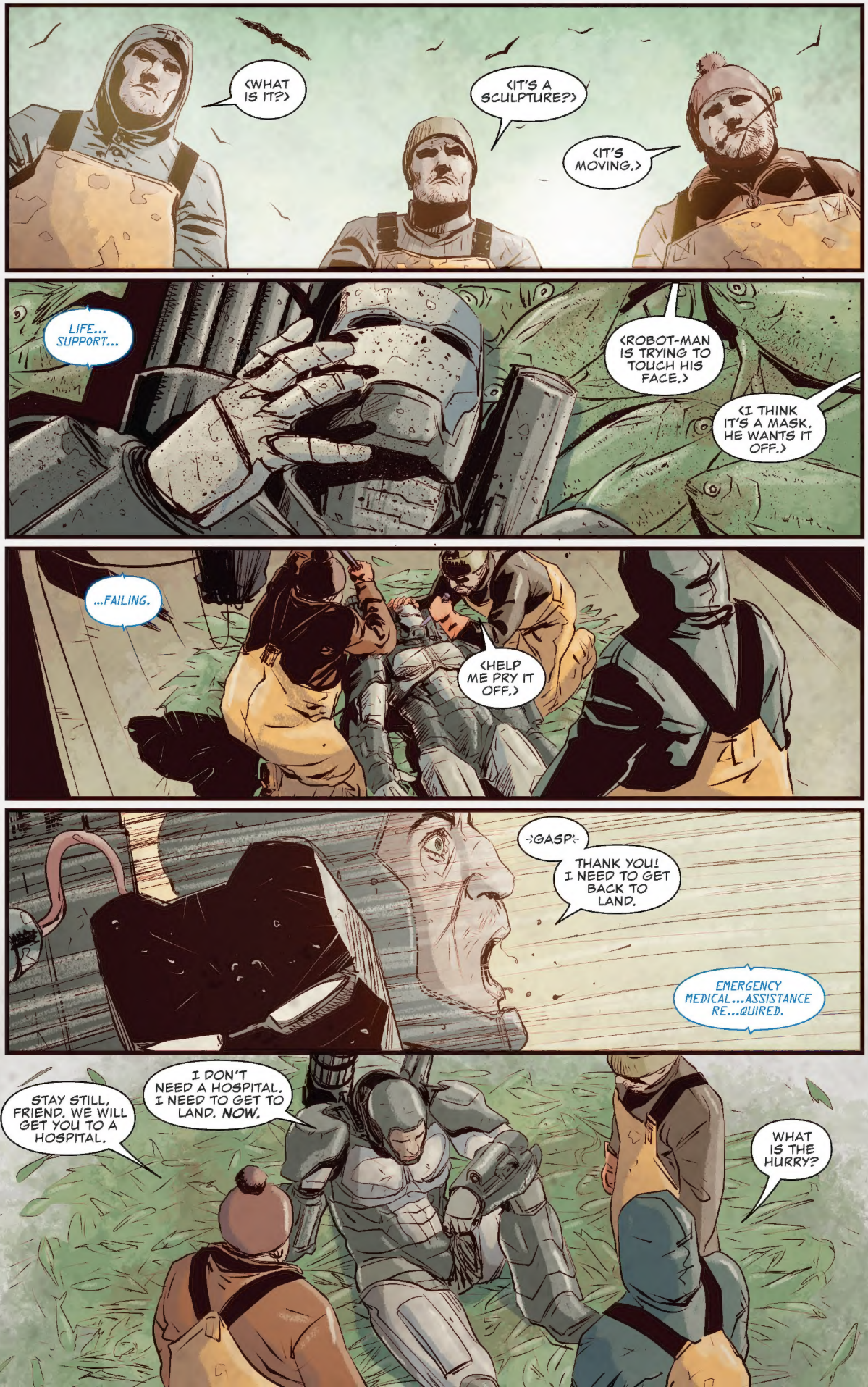
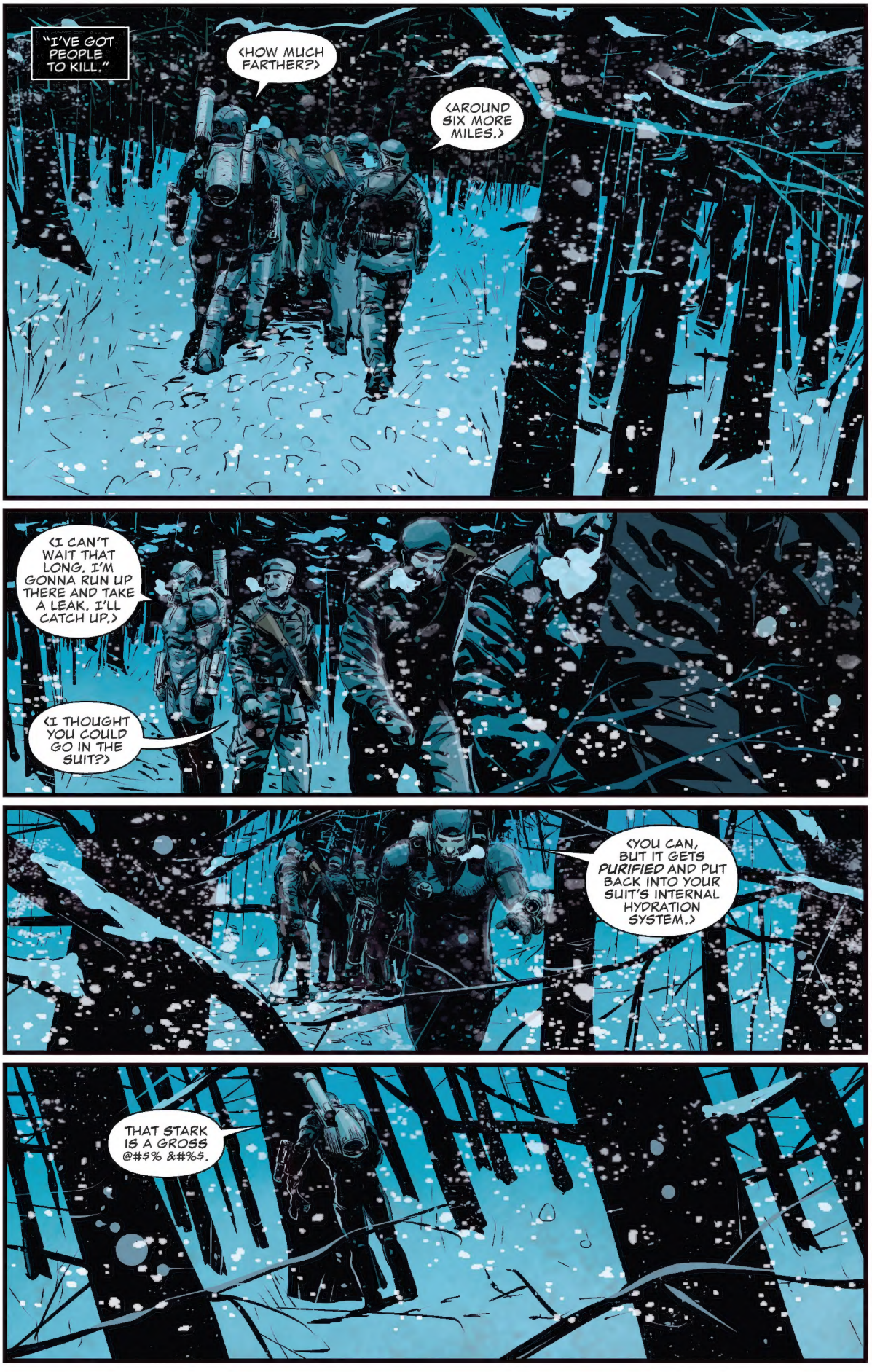

‹MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO ME. FASCISTS EAT FISH THE SAME AS SOCIALISTS.›*
*TRANSLATED FROM CHERNAYAN.
‹HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SELL FISH IF PETROV MAKES YOU JOIN HIS ARMY? OR PUTS YOU IN A LABOR CAMP?›
‹WHO AM I FOR PETROV TO BOTHER WITH?›
‹IT'S THE FUNNY THING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S WARS, JAN...›
‹OPENING THE NET!›
‹...THEY HAVE A WAY OF DRAGGING YOU INTO THEM.›


‹WHAT IS IT?›
‹IT'S A SCULPTURE?›
‹IT'S MOVING.›
LIFE... SUPPORT...
‹ROBOT-MAN IS TRYING TO TOUCH HIS FACE.›
‹I THINK IT'S A MASK. HE WANTS IT OFF.›
...FAILING.
‹HELP ME PRY IT OFF.›
÷GASP÷
THANK YOU! I NEED TO GET BACK TO LAND.
EMERGENCY MEDICAL...ASSISTANCE RE...QUIRED.
STAY STILL, FRIEND. WE WILL GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL.
I DON'T NEED A HOSPITAL. I NEED TO GET TO LAND. NOW.
WHAT IS THE HURRY?


"I'VE GOT PEOPLE TO KILL."
<HOW MUCH FARTHER?>
<AROUND SIX MORE MILES.>
<I CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG. I'M GONNA RUN UP THERE AND TAKE A LEAK. I'LL CATCH UP.>
<I THOUGHT YOU COULD GO IN THE SUIT?>
<YOU CAN, BUT IT GETS *PURIFIED* AND PUT BACK INTO YOUR SUIT'S INTERNAL HYDRATION SYSTEM.>
THAT STARK IS A GROSS @#$% &#%$.

PSSSS
PSSSS
OH GOD.
PSS--
YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
Y-YES.
GOOD. IF YOU WANT TO KEEP BEING ABLE TO DO THAT STANDING UP YOU'LL DO WHAT I SAY.

TAKE OFF THE SUIT.
IT'S BIOMETRICALLY BONDED WITH ME. YOU CAN'T USE IT.
TAKE IT OFF OR I TAKE IT OFF YOU.
MY UNIT... THEY'LL COME LOOKING FOR ME.
THEY WON'T FIND YOU.
WHO MADE THIS?
TONY STARK ORIGINALLY, I GUESS.
WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
I MEAN...IT'S S.H.I.E.L.D. TECH.
AND WHERE DID YOU GET S.H.I.E.L.D. TECH?
I WAS S.H.I.E.L.D.

"S.H.I.E.L.D. TRAINED YOU. THAT MEAN YOU CAN FIX MY ARMOR?"
"I...YES."
"BUT NOT OUT HERE."
"WHERE?"
"OUR OLD FACILITY ISN'T TOO FAR. HALF-HOUR DRIVE, MAYBE. I COULD FIX IT THERE, BUT THAT PLACE IS UNDER PETROV'S CONTROL NOW."
"GOOD."

I'M GOING TO GO HAVE A LOOK AROUND.
YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME OUT HERE, MAN! I'LL DIE OF EXPOSURE!
THERE ARE WORSE WAYS TO GO.

(I'M TAKING HER ON A TRIP FOR OUR ANNIVERSARY, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE SHE WANTS TO-->
(WHAA?)
(AAAHH!)
STOP RIGHT THERE.
I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO UNLOCK THE FACILITY.

<WHAT...>
<HELP... M-ME!>
<WHAT'S GOING ON?>
<IT'S THE PUNISHER! HE TIED ME UP. HE'S GOING TO ATTACK THE BASE!>
SCHLUNK
READY TO WORK?

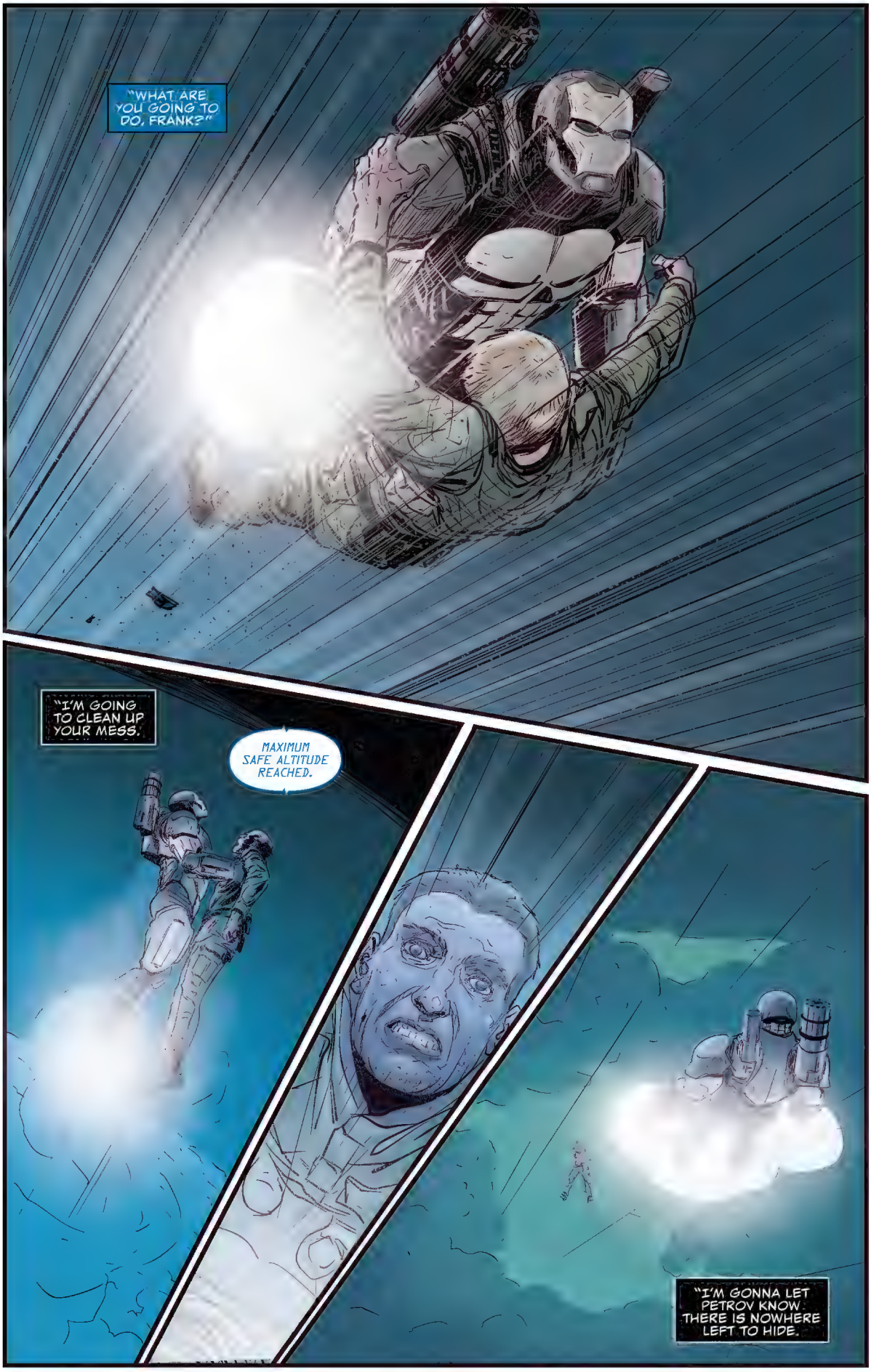
THE ENGINEERING LAB IS JUST AROUND THIS CORNER ON THE RIGHT.
THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY MORE GUARDS.
BANG
BANG
BANG
OH... I FORGOT ABOUT THEM, I GUESS.

(WHAT'S GOING ON?)
GET THE TOOLS YOU NEED.
AND YOU, KEEP EATING.
YOU'VE GOT ONE HOUR AND THEN--
INCOM...ING TRANSMI--
FRANK CASTLE. GUESS WHY I'M CALLING...
BECAUSE I'M YOUR ONLY HOPE?
HEH. I GET THAT JOKE.
WHAT JOKE?
WHY ARE YOU BREAKING INTO MY LAB, CASTLE?
NOT YOURS ANYMORE, FURY.

NO, REALLY, FRANK. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
A BUNCH OF YOUR DIET IRON MEN BROKE MY LITTLE TOY, SO I ENLISTED AGENT SAPORTA HERE TO FIX IT.
YOU KNOW AGENT SAPORTA, RIGHT?
HELLO, DIRECTOR FURY.
SAPORTA, THAT TRAITOROUS LITTLE #$%@? HE'S NOT AN ENGINEER. HE WAS A JUNIOR AGENT. HE CAN'T FIX @#!$.
NO, WAIT. I--
BANG
YOUR GOONS BROKE MY SUIT, FURY.
IT'S THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S SUIT, FRANK. YOU'RE JUST BORROWING IT.
STILL NEED TO GET IT FIXED IF I'M GOING TO FINISH THIS.
SANDWICH, YOU KNOW HOW TO MAKE THIS WORK AGAIN?
M-MAYBE.
YOU'RE HIRED.

ONCE THE ARMOR IS UP AND RUNNING, YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP GOING AFTER PETROV AND MY FORMER AGENTS?
YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE MESS YOU MADE OVER HERE, AREN'T YOU?
NOT WHAT I'M ASKING ABOUT.
REALLY? BECAUSE CARING ABOUT POOR PEOPLE 5,000 MILES AWAY DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOUR STYLE, FURY.
I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT A MAN WHO EXECUTES PICKPOCKETS ON CITY STREETS DOESN'T GET TO TALK TO ME ABOUT COMPASSION, CASTLE.
FAIR ENOUGH.
IT JUST SEEMS LIKE EVERY TIME ONE OF YOUR PLAYS GOES SIDEWAYS, YOU FURYS ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE STANDING BY TO WIPE AWAY THE FINGERPRINTS.
FAIR ENOUGH.
SO... WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?
I CAME HERE TO KILL BAD GUYS. DON'T CARE WHAT UNIFORM THEY USED TO WEAR.
WELL. ALL RIGHT THEN.
BUT I NEED TWO THINGS FROM YOU. YOU GOTTA MONITOR OSCAR MAYER OVER HERE AND MAKE SURE HE ISN'T $#!%*?@ UP MY SUIT.
DONE. WHAT'S THE SECOND THING?

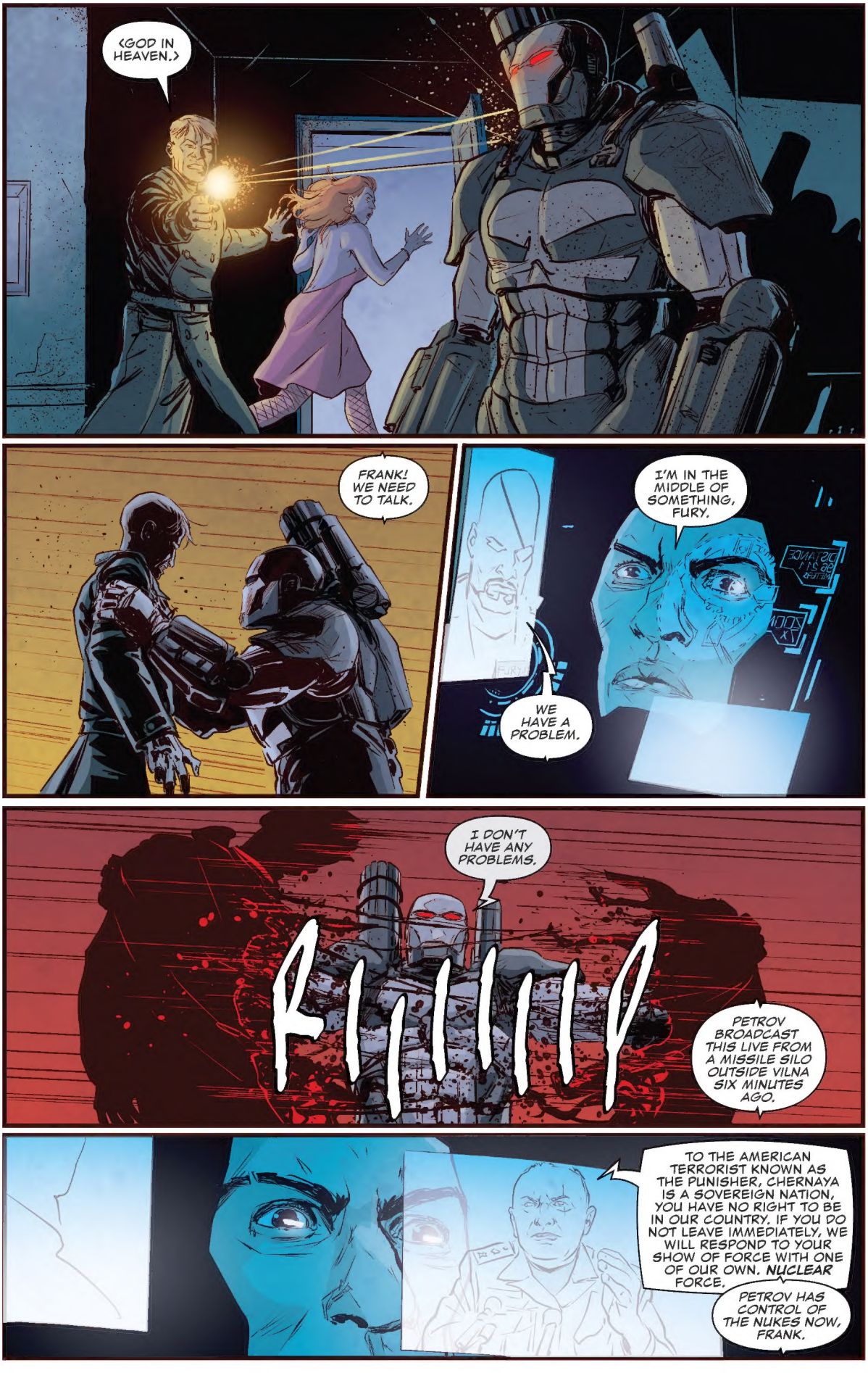
"I NEED FULL INFO ON ALL THE AGENTS THAT FLIPPED WHEN S.H.I.E.L.D. WENT BELLY UP. PERSONNEL FILES. LAST KNOWN ADDRESSES. EVERYTHING."
<EVERYONE IN THE TRUCK! I DO NOT WANT TO TELL YOU AGAIN.>
<FILTHY ANIMALS.>
"I KNOW THESE GUYS, FRANK. SAPORTA WAS A RUNT. THE REST ARE THE REAL DEAL. THEY'RE GONE. YOU WON'T FIND THEM."
<NOW WHAT-->
"THEN GET ME A LIST OF PETROV'S CLOSEST MEN.
"I WANT HIS GENERALS, HIS LIEUTENANTS, HIS RIGHT-HAND MEN."


"WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, FRANK?"
"I'M GOING TO CLEAN UP YOUR MESS.
MAXIMUM SAFE ALTITUDE REACHED.
"I'M GONNA LET PETROV KNOW THERE IS NOWHERE LEFT TO HIDE.

"I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD THEIR MUSIC BEFORE, BUT I SAID "WHY NOT?"
"IF PETROV WANTS TO HIDE AMONG HIS MEN...
CHNK
<WHAT THE HELL?>
"I'LL JUST GET RID OF HIS MEN.
<HIT THE BRAKES!>
<I AM!>
"I WILL FIND THEM WHERE THEY WORK...

"I WILL FIND THEM WHERE THEY PLAY...
<WHAT THE...?>
<NO! GO AWAY!>

"UNTIL PETROV HAS TO REVEAL HIMSELF."
<THAT WAS FUN.>
<THIS WILL BE MORE FUN.>
<I'LL HANG UP MY COAT.>
<AND I'LL GO FIX US ANOTHER DRINK.>
<TIMUR, WHAT IS THIS?>
ARMOR DETECTED. STEALTH MODE COMPROMISED.
WE GOTTA WORK ON THAT.
AHHH!


‹GOD IN HEAVEN.›
FRANK! WE NEED TO TALK.
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING, FURY.
WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
I DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS.
FLUMP
PETROV BROADCAST THIS LIVE FROM A MISSILE SILO OUTSIDE VILNA SIX MINUTES AGO.
TO THE AMERICAN TERRORIST KNOWN AS THE PUNISHER, CHERNAYA IS A SOVEREIGN NATION, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE IN OUR COUNTRY. IF YOU DO NOT LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, WE WILL RESPOND TO YOUR SHOW OF FORCE WITH ONE OF OUR OWN. NUCLEAR FORCE.
PETROV HAS CONTROL OF THE NUKES NOW, FRANK.

YOU NEED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY RIGHT NOW.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND, FRANK?
I TOLD YOU HE'D EVENTUALLY COME OUT OF HIDING.

FRANK ANSWERS

There's nowhere Petrov can hide from the Punisher...and nowhere letters can hide from Matthew Rosenberg's answers! So let's see what you guys are thinking about this *Punisher: War Machine* business...

I've been a huge fan of the Punisher since I was 14. I'm now 40, by the way... Anyway, I love the art and the story in the new War Machine arc. Please keep it up, realistic looking, not corny or cartoonish. Love it! I'm excited to see where this story leads. Once again, keep Frank gritty and real. Thanks for bringing Frank back and keep Rosenberg, Villanova and Loughridge!

Sincerely,
Uncle Elvis

(There was once a guy in the Marvel letters section who used to sign his name this way...and I've decided I'm taking it over...it has been at least 16 years...)

Hey Uncle Elvis,
Or Impostor Uncle Elvis, as it were. Thanks so much for checking out the book and for the kind words. As a lifelong Punisher fan myself, it's always nice to hear that another life-long Punisher fan likes the book. Even if he has stolen someone's identity to tell me.

Dear Marvel,
Punisher as the new War Machine? Dear GOD yes. Feels like a natural evolution. Please let this concept stick around for at LEAST a while, if not permanently. Let Frank deal with some larger scale threats for a while, give him some new team-ups. Awesome, just awesome. First Doom, now Castle? Are you INSIDE OF MY HEAD, Marvel? Keep up the good work.

Z. Phillips

Hi,
I'll answer this one on behalf of Marvel. Weirdly, I'm authorized to do that. I'm glad this feels like a natural step for you. I get *a lot* of people writing me and messaging me to say "of course he'd steal the armor." Which, obviously, I agree with. But then every so often I get a "Why did you change Frank? I hate it. I hate you. You're stupid." And while parts of that are undoubtedly true, I still like to think we haven't changed the character of the man, just the caliber of the weapons. Anyway, as we keep going I think you will see the threats get much bigger and you might just see a team-up that I'm pretty excited about.

My dude Matthew Rosenberg,
Frank Castle would be proud at how well you KILLED this first issue. I wasn't too keen on the last volume of PUNISHER, but after hearing your creative mind and Villanova's intense artwork would be putting this book together, I knew it was going to be special and damn was it a masterpiece. I was smiling the whole dang time! It was the Punisher I felt connected to wayyyyy back when I was about 10 years old in every single way. Thank you for incorporating him into the MU in this book, too. It's not too often we see Castle too tied up with the crazy universe he lives in and the way you're making it all happen is satisfying and feels realistic to the character.

It's clear that you know what you're doing here and I hate to ask for things when this book was a 10/10... but I am a fan writing in...so, like...it's kinda my duty to ask for stuff and be a pain in the ass, so here it goes! You mentioned this book will focus heavily on Castle's LEGACY and frankly, not too much legacy resides with the Punisher. That's the beautiful thing with him that basically no other character attains in a positive way. Other than unrelenting punishment, firepower and the mission to clean up the world one scumbag at a time, he does have one other piece of legacy thing that jumps out at me and that's his only recurring archnemesis—the man made of pieces—Jigsaw. I hope to see him down the line SPECIFICALLY from you because he's a villain I know you could put your own sick twist on and sate my hankering. Haven't seen him in a while and it's time for him to have an arc that pushes Castle to his limits.

Keep killing this book. Can't wait to see where this ride goes.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Ricci
Boston, Massachusetts

My dude Nicholas,
Glad you liked the first issue. And I'm sorry you didn't like the last run. I was a fan, but I also know that the beauty of Marvel comics is creative teams come in and take things a new way, and then after a while that whole process restarts. These characters are much bigger than any one writer or artist.

As for your question, which was not a pain in the ass (but I like that you wanted it to be), the question of Frank's legacy is something I've been thinking on a lot. And you are right, it's hard to pin it to specific things because most of the things that cross paths with Frank end up dead. But I think there are ideas and concepts inherent

to the character that we are really trying to re-examine. I can't go into a lot of it without spoiling things, but the line between soldier and weapon, vigilante and villain, justice and vengeance, those are all things we really wanted to explore in a fresh way. And as for Jigsaw, I am also a huge fan of the man. He is one of the most terrifying villains in all of the MU. I can tell you he isn't showing up in the immediate future, but...be patient.

Hello, awesome PUNISHER crew!
I don't think I've ever had this much fun reading THE PUNISHER! The idea of Frank getting the War Machine suit is genius. I'm really happy to see Frank finally get his hands on some real horsepower. I know this is supposed to be for one mission, but please let him keep the armor. After all these years of Frank scraping by in sewers and battle vans he has earned it!

Thanks again
Bruce Shonk Jr.

Hi Bruce,
I'm glad you're having fun. I don't know that I'd call putting him in the War Machine armor "genius," but since both my editors are going to read this, yeah, let's say it was genius.

And yes, if Nick Fury gets his way, the armor is only supposed to be Frank's for one mission. But this isn't Nick Fury's book now, is it?

I read the latest issues of PUNISHER #218 and #219, and I don't care what anyone thinks of me, but I'm really enjoying this storyline. Punisher in the War Machine armor? Why didn't I think of that? I hope you guys have a good ending in mind for this, because so far I think it's fun. That's just me, though.

Best wishes,
Kipp

Wait... What do people think of you? Damn. I'm one of the people who put him in the armor. What do they think of me?

As for the ending, I've actually known what I wanted to do since I first pitched the book and I just got the OK to do it the other day, so I think the end of our little saga is going to be pretty crazy.

And for the record, Kipp, I know you don't care what people think of you, but I like ya.

Just finished PUNISHER #218. Excellent job. I loved the dialogue between Castle and Fury. I read every word of Fury's in Sam Jackson's voice, and it works. Good dialogue is the key to making a good book great, and this was a great read. I'm a longtime fan of Frank's, but some of his more recent runs have been rather uninspiring to put it nicely. I feel like this creative team gets it. Thank you. I was ready to let this book go after PUNISHER Vol. 11, but now I am looking forward to reading PUNISHER again. Can't wait to see the crazy ways Frank will use the War Machine armor. This is going to be awesome.

Bryan Anderson
Murfreesboro, TN

Thanks, Bryan!

Glad you like my dialogue. I say it all out loud as I write it, which makes me the scourge of various coffee shops in my neighborhood, but hopefully it pays off in the end. And yeah, Fury vs. Castle is one of my favorite contentious relationships in all of comics. Two unstoppable forces going head-to-head.

Again, I can't say much about what we have planned, but you all ain't seen nothing yet with regards to Frank using the armor. He's just warming up.

NEXT

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BE SURE TO MARK THEM "OKAY TO PRINT."